

Forrest R. Frank
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Dear Professor Lederberg:

I wish to bring to your attention an unconfirmed story pertaining to attempted use of bacteriological methods of warfare by some Stanford University students during the occupation of the Applied Electronics Laboratory during April, 1969. The following story was repeated to me by several students during the course of the arms control course taught Winter-Spring 1971. No names were used then, and after two years of trying to locate the participants, I am unable to verify the story in any respect. Knowing the intensity of emotion prevalent among the most active members of the "A3M" or April third Movement, I find the story well within the realm of possibility.

During Spring Quarter, 1969, Mr. Ned Groth, formerly a graduate student in the Department of Biology, conducted a course on problems of chemical and biological warfare. During the quarter, Stanford University was wracked by internal disruption over the issue of control over Stanford Research Institute. A fairly large number of students demanded that the Board of Trustees bring SRI under tighter University control, and that University guidelines covering classified research be applied to SRI. In support of these demands, students seized and occupied the Applied Electronics Laboratory. Some of Mr. Groth's students cultured a batch of Salmonella in a particular manner as to render the strain immune to all anti-biotics other than penecillan. The expressed intent was to issue an ultimatum to the Board of Trustees regarding the issues of the "strike", i.e. cessation of all chemical and bacteriological warfare research at Stanford and SRI, and tighter control over SRI's research in general. If the ultimatum was not met, the Salmonella would be dumped into the University's water supply, which at the time was easily accessed for this or comparable purposes.

I am told that Mr. Groth allowed his students to culture the bacteria, and even allowed them to begin planning pertaining to the dispersion of the agent into the University's water supply. I am told that Mr. Groth intervened at the last possible moment reminding his students of the dangers of their plan. Specifically, I am told that he noted that most victims of a Salmonella attack of the sort proposed would not experience particularly violent symptoms. If treated by a physician using penacillan, the symptoms would clear up and the victims would recover. However, he posed the question to the actors, what would happen to those victims who were allergic to penacillan? Mr. Groth described the symptoms and prognosis of anaphylactic shock, including the legal implications should a victim succumb as a result of proper treatment of the bacteria-induced ailment.

As a result of Mr. Groth's lecture on the probable effects of the attack proposed by a few individuals, a decision was made to abandon the plan. I understand that the batch of approximately two liters of Salmonella was disposed of with some difficulty.

FRANK, F.

I regret that I cannot document further the facts of this alleged intended use of bacteriological warfare agents by a handful of dissidents. I hope that this account , unsubstantiated though it may be, will be of some use in your efforts to impress upon members of the U.S. Senate of the need to move forward in the separate areas of chemical and biological warfare arms control.

Sincerely yours,


Forrest R. Frank